THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

Vol. 3, No. 5 May, 1964

We have noticed in past years that about March and April in the year, there is a decided dropping off in the amount of mail we receive which we put down to spring fever, gardening, etc. This reprieve is always welcomed by the secretary as it gives him a much needed breather; however, since we depend in large part for news coming in the mail, it makes the task of assembling the newsletter a little more difficult.

The mail again picks up in May and June, and then falls off considerably in the months of July and August. Musigram, a similarly inclined magazine states on their front page that they do not publish during June, July and August. We interpret this as an indication that if people are not writing letters, neither are they reading them. We expect to publish in June, but are again considering putting out a combined July-August issue. This decision will depend on the amount of material we receive in during the next two months.

TREEMONISHA.

Sufficient additional interest in Treemonisha was apparently aroused in our last newsletter to cause us to take another look at the whole project. It appears that there is an extremely enthusiastic group which says in effect, "Continue with this project at all costs". The remainder of those who originally signified interest have either been scared off or are sitting tight awaiting developments. See page 33.

The legwork and time involved in this project are considerably greater than in say turning out an L.P. record or a handful of E.P.'s. The latter programme must await one way or another the decision on Treemonisha. (see below) The decision is yours. Your cheque in the mail today for $15.00 will bring us that much closer to completing the project, and them on to other projects.

MORE SOCIETY L.P.'s.

Further action on L.P.'s must await developments with Treemonisha (see above) We hope to have something definite on both projects by next month.

OTHER L.P.'s

Ann Charters new L.P.' A Joplin Bouquet' is now in stock and available from the Society. $5.00 postpaid.

The Professors Vol 2. We have no further word on this L.P., and do not have it in stock. Order from Paul Affeldt, 357 Leighton Drive, Ventura, Calif.

SHEET MUSIC.

There has been a delay at the printers with FLORIDA RAG, but it should be completed any day now, the 23rd in our reprint series. $1.00 postpaid.

Folios: There exists some confusion as to which folios we have in stock and of their contents, and prices. Following is the current situation:

Play Them Rags.	$1.50,	contains Temptation, Dill Pickles, Riverside Rag, Sugar Cane, Black and White, Bugle Call, Beets & Turnips, Pineapple, Tanglefoot Rag, Chili-Sauce, Beeswax, Dixie, Something Doing.
Album of Rags #1.	$1.50.....	Black & White, Johnson, Powder Rag, Calico, Fiddlesticks Rag, Russian Rag.
Album Of Rags #2.	$1.50.....	Jubilee Rag, Smash-Up Rag, Dynamite Rag, That Fussy Rag, That Lovin' Rag, Blue Goose.
Album of Rags #3.	$1.50.....	Monkey Blues, Tickle The Ivories Rag, Turkey Trot, Tierney Rag, Rig-ajig Rag, Cat on the Keyboard.
Feldman's Album	$1.50.....	Red Pepper Rag, Haunting Rag, Red Rose Rag, Porcupine Rag, Grizzly Bear Rag, Skeleton Rag, Black Cat Capers.
The Ragtime Book (simplified for beginners)	$1.50.....	Banjo Twang, Bos'n Rag, Cottonfield Dance Eli Green's Cakewalk, Georgia Camp Meeting, Hello, Ma Baby, Hilarity Rag, Maple Leaf Rag Rag-Ma-La, Smoky Mokes, Tellit To Me Warmin Up In Dixie, Weeping Willow Rag
3/6 Folios (A pair)	$3.00	Maple Leaf Rag, Climax Rag, Grace & Beauty, Hilarity Rag, Cataract Rag, plus seven Blue numbers.
Jelly Roll Morton Series (11 separate pieces)	$5.00	Naked Dance, The Crave, Buddy Bolden's Blues, Mamie's Blues, The Miserere, Winin'Boy Blues, My Home is in a Southern Town, Big Fat Ham,
(50¢ each)		Why?, Sweet Substitute, If you knew.
Max Morath's 100 Ragtime Classics.	$15.00	Write for list of the 100. There are no fillers in this volume. Masterpieces only.
Ragtime Piano	$ 2.50....	Country Club, Euphonic Sounds, Magnetic Rag, Paragon Rag, Caprice Rag, Daintiness Rag, Rag Baby, Sumthin' Doin', Hot Scotch Rag, Pepper Sauce, Weeping Willow Rag(Fischler) Fashion Rag, Nighty Night, Rag-Bag, Grizzly Bear Rag, Dogzigity Rag.
Zez Confrey Originals	$2.50	Contains 17 well known Confrey numbers, see p.6, Vol.3, No. 2 for list

Note: We can no longer supply Winn's How to Play Ragtime.

Karl Kramer writes from Beverley Hills: Cannot resist commenting on your statement that this opera would "require considerable alteration and touching up before it could be classified as a worthwhile opera". This touched me to the quick and while I agree with your right to such an opinion, I emphatically dissent from the opinion itself.

First I admit that such ragtime buffs as Max Morath and Knocky Parker have expressed some disappointment with this work. But when I queried Parker he had little to say about the music and seemed most concerned with the terrible simplicity of the story. Max has had his copy a short time during which he has been busy with his concerts, and I doubt if he has given sufficient study to the music.

The trouble seems to be that Treemonisha is presently being analyzed only by ragtime enthusiasts and in comparison to Joplin's ragtime works. They expect a succession of Maple Leafs strung together with a narrative. Treemonisha is NOT A RAGTIME OPERA, and has little or no ragtime in it. Once this is understood, we can more adequately analyze its values or deficiencies.

There are two measures of judgment; first what this project represented in its time as compared to similar endeavours; and secondly and more important just how good is the music and what position should it hold for all time.

When Joplin essayed Treemonisha there was no such thing as American Opera. All the operatic traditions, both light and grand, were European in concept and structure. The first Grand Opera composed by an American was probably "Scarlet Letter" (1896) by Walter Damrosch. The same composer tried again with "Cyrano"(1913), and "Man Without a Country" (1937). The critical opinion them, as now, was that Mr. Damrosch was better equipped to conduct operas rather than write them.

So when Joplin wrote his opera there was no American school to study or to follow. He was the first composer to write a native opera with native music. All other early efforts were European. The year he copyrighted Treemonisha (1911), Victor Herbert presented his Indian Opera, "Natoma" with a full orchestra and a lavish production at the Philadelphia Opera House. Despite this opulence, Natoma was a resounding flop. His Indian music smacked of Broadway musical comedy, and in fact there never was any native Indian music of consequence.

The same thing applies to Cadman's Shanewis (1918) and the drawing room wonder boy, Henry Hadley, whose "Cleopatra" manages to evoke Verdi, Puccini, Donizetti, and a dozen others in one fell swoop. No, my ragtime friends, there was no American opera when Joplin wrote Treemonisha, twenty four years before "Porgy and Bess", and even today there is little or none, since the popular Menotti writes entirely in the Italian tradition.

So now that the historical perspective shows what a courageous and pioneering artist Joplin was, let's try and understand this music in relation to the time and circumstances. Certainly Wagner is not rated by such junk as "Rienzi", and the primitive aspect of Treemonisha should not be the evidence of declaring it inadequate. The negro character, speech and music WERE primitive in the era the opera is set, and it would have been false and artificial to melodize this setting with Italian arias. Whatever else it is, Treemonisha is genuine.

Since this opera was written for blended voices amd full orchestra, it can hardly be appreciated from a piano score alone. Some investigation is now being made into a recording project of one of our fine negro choirs doing several of the spiritual numbers, -"Good Advice", "Wrong is Never Right". And in my opinion, this will establish that this is great music, probably the greatest American music ever written.

One of your correspondents rang the bell when he said that Joplin was a great composer who wrote ragtime by incidence. In his later years, Joplin was cracking the ragtime shell with such numbers as Magnetic Rag, Euphonic Sounds, etc. Some day there may be a Joplin opera recreated from his entire output, and this should be a RAGTIME OPERA. Hope I can be around long enough to hear it. Karl Kramer.

FROM OUR MAILBAG.

Roger Hankins, 135 Marlborough, Boston, Mass writes that he has a couple of hundred duplicates of different rags in their original form, and is looking for someone who would like to trade the sheet music, The music is not for sale. Just for trading.

Jim Sorrell asks about the situation on the Jelly Roll Morton Library of Congress recordings. He wants to know how much of the 5 weeks of Morton's recording are on the Circle L.P.'s, and where they can be purchased. Which gives an excellent opportunity to tell any Jelly Roll addicts, who don't already know, about the famous Library of Congress recordings:-

"This TWELVE VOLUME SET of long-play recordings derives from the material originally set down, over a five week period beginning on May 21, 1938, in Washington, D.C., in the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress. Under the auspices of the Library, and its Chief of the Music Division, Harold Spivacke, and responding to the questions of its Folk Music Curator, Alan Lomax, Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton (born circa 1885; died 1941) combined commentary, playing singing, exaggeration and autobiography to create this important documentary: a personalized history of New Orleans Jazz as recounted by one of its most colourful and significant figures."

For instance, Vol. 3 is about two things: (1) ragtime and the relationship of Morton to ragtime, and (2)some elements of Morton's music itself. We presume that these epic L.P's are still available from Riverside Records, 553 West 51st St., New York 19, N.Y.

The Vestal Press, 3533 Stratford Drive, Vestal, N.Y. announces the reprinting of "two of the most interesting, important and unusual catalogues in the Mechanical Music Field".

> The Electrical Mastery of Music, the story of Mills Novelty Company's incredible Viol-Cello and Viol-Xylophone, and
> Coinola Portfolio, of nickelodeons and ochestrions, plus REPRODUCO piano-pipe organs for theatres.

Albert D Nippert, 131 South Kensico, Valhalla, N.Y. is interested in Nickle-odeon and player piano ragtime rolls. The only listing we know of is the one contained in the index of 'They All Played Ragtime'.

We recently received a listing of ragtime rolls ... 47 altogether 88 noters, from Old Salzburg, 1626 Wisconsin N.W., Washington 7, D.C. The price for the lot is only $215.00, and the crating is free.

The Boston Herald of Feb. 13 carried an article on the rediscovery in Avalon Mississippi, of one John Hurt. The article, by Robert Taylor, recounts John's early life, his rise and decline, etc. The interesting feature of the article is that when john, a 3-finger guitarist, was asked to play, he struck the opening strains of 'My Creole Belle', Lampe's well known rag written in 1900.

Continuing our series of pianos, their players, and their friends, we reproduce on page 35 a photo sent us by Gary Ellison who hails from Springfield, Missouri, and who calls himself "The Ragtime Prince". No mention was made of the princess.

Also in the following pages is another in our ragtime article reprint series.

Who's Playing Where ?

Paul Keller writes that he is just finishing up at the Golden Bee in Colorado Springs.

Johnny Maddox is at El Cabana , Chicago until May 5
then at Cherry Creek Inn, Denver, May 18 - May 30
Flamingo Inn, South Sioux City, Neb, June 1 - 13
Surf Cocktail Lounge, Lacrosse,Wisc. June 15 - 27
Drake Hotel, Regina, Sask., June 29 - July 25
Cherry Creek Inn, Denver, Aug. 31 - Sept 19
We hope to have some news of Fall TV dates with Johnny Maddox soon.

Glenn Rowell, is currently at Cherry Creek Inn, Denver

"RAGTIME PRINCE" GARY ELLISON

The Record Changer - December 1948
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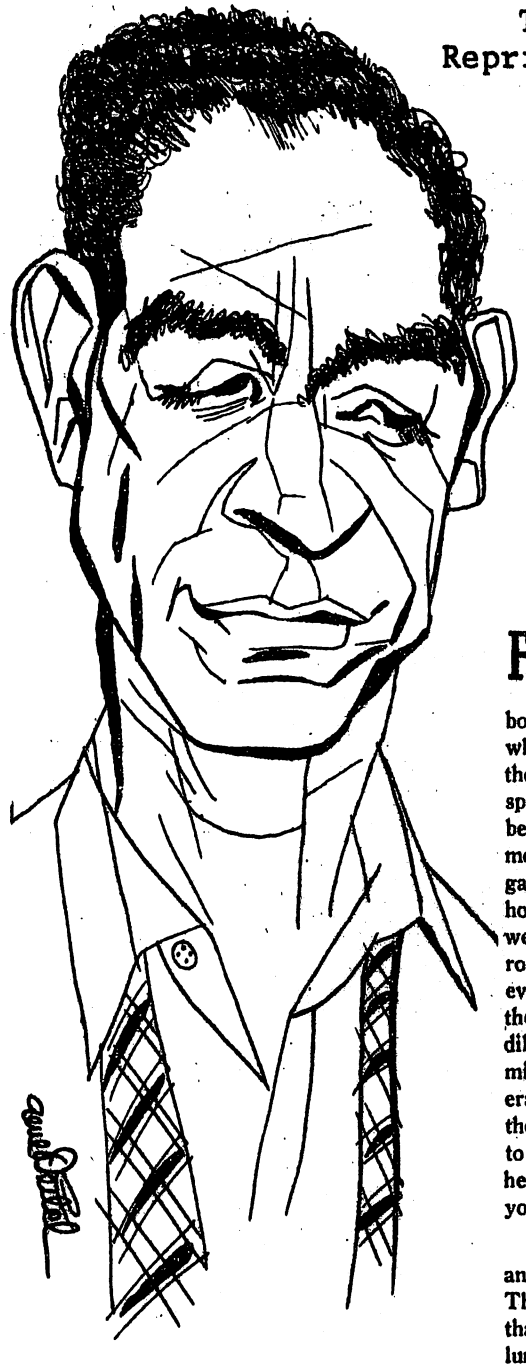

new orleans recollections

about jelly-roll

by r. j. carew

Ferd Morton was fond of talking about the old times in New Orleans. He knew the town very well—downtown where he was born and where his family lived, and uptown where his godmother's home was located in the garden district. As he grew older he spent more and more time uptown, probably because his godmother permitted considerably more freedom than he enjoyed at home. The garden district was a very good neighborhood, but in the back of town portions there were scattered about here and there barrooms and honkytonks. In old New Orleans even the poorest and humblest had music, and these barrooms were usually equipped with dilapidated pianos, at which an entertainer might play to pick up a few dimes, but generally the playing was sporadic and done by the musically inclined patrons. Jelly Roll liked to recall the eary blues and honky tonk tunes he heard and learned thereabouts in his youth.

Those were the days when Buddy Bolden and his legendary trumpet were flourishing. The instrument was probably a cornet, but that is of little importance—when he put his lung power behind a tune, it could be heard a great distance. Bunk Johnson and Jelly Roll were largely responsible for the reputation that has been acquired by "King" Bolden these past few years; while he lived Bolden was known on both sides of the Mississippi River, but today his fame has spanned oceans. Buddy himself would doubtless be amazed if he could know that Morton's almost plaintive "I Thot I Heard Buddy Bolden Say . . ." has been heard with genuine pleasure to the antipodes and back.

Thot I heard Buddy Bolden say
"You're nasty, you're dirty, take it away.
You're terrible, you're awful, take it away,"
I thot I heard him say.
Thot I heard Buddy Bolden shout
Open up that window, and let the foul air out,
"Open up that window, and let the foul air out,"
I thot I heard Buddy Bolden say.

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Jelly Roll's story of how far he could hear Bolden's playing has caused many a smile of unbelief, and at least one well known writer was moved to get into print with a vehement denial of the possibility of the sound carrying so far. Morton used to say that, when Buddy was playing at Lincoln Park and turned his trumpet towards the city on a quiet evening, he could be heard around Jackson Avenue and South Robertson Street, "a distance of ten or twelve miles." This corner is located in the back portion of the garden district, probably not far from where his godmother lived. Actually, there is no doubt that Buddy's horn could be heard in the area mentioned when he was playing in Lincoln Park and atmospheric conditions were favorable, for it is but a scant two miles.

Was it excusable for Morton to say "ten or twelve" miles? Only Ferdinand Morton could answer that, but I believe there is an explanation. Lincoln Park was located on Carrollton Avenue, and was conveniently reached in those days by the St. Charles and Tulane Belt street cars. This belt line furnished a very popular ride during the early 1900's; one could board the car at the starting point on Canal Street and ride all the way around the belt and back to the starting point for a nickel, a ride of ten or twelve miles. Except for the old elevated lines in New York, the St. Charles-Tulane Belt was as long a ride as I ever got for a 5c piece in my young days. So it wouldn't be hard for Morton and his pals, idling about South Robertson Street on a quiet evening, to say they could hear Buddy Bolden's trumpet "all the way 'round the St. Charles Belt, and that's ten or twelve miles!" ignoring, for the sake of musical history, that a straight line is the shortest distance, etc.